

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DAMASC 02887 060914Z
ACTION NODS-00

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TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2980

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DEPT PASS LONDON IMMEDIATE FOR SECRETARY FROM MURPHY

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR, US, SY
SUBJECT: ASSAD-CARTER MEETING - MAY 5 DISCUSSION

1. MET ASSAD LATE EVENING MAY 5 AT HIS HOUSE. OPENED WITH REVIEW OF HUSSEIN VISIT TO WASHINGTON TO WHICH HE LISTENED INTENTLY. (STATE 95780). HE NOTED HE HAD AGREED TO SEE SHARAF IN GENEVA SUNDAY AND WOULD GET FURTHER READOUT ON VISIT.

2. ASSAD THEN SPOKE OF HIS OWN MEETING WITH CARTER. SAID HOW MUCH HE WAS LOOKING FORWARD TO THIS, GIVEN SIGNALS THAT THE U.S. IS PREPARED TO DEVELOP ITS OWN MIDDLE EAST POLICY. HE RECALLED HIS MANY DISCUSSIONS WITH SECRETARY KISSINGER IN WHICH LATTER HAD DETAILED TO HIM WHY USG WAS UNABLE TO MOLD ITS ME POLICY AS IT DESIRED BECAUSE OF CONSTRAINTS IMPOSED ON IT BY DOMESTIC JEWISH OPINION, WHICH IN TURN MANIPULATED BY ISRAEL. NOW HE HAD IMPRESSION CARTER WOULD ACT INDEPENDENTLY, DOING WHAT HE THOUGHT BEST FOR U.S. EISENHOWER HAD DONE THIS IN 1956 TAKING AN EXTRAORDINARY STAND NOT ONLY IN OPPOSITION TO ISRAEL BUT ALSO TO TWO CLOSE ALLIES, FRANCE AND BRITAIN, OVER THE SUEZ CRISIS. "MATTERS IN WASHINGTON ARE NOW MOVING, I BELIEVE, WITH THE CORRECT
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ORIENTATION."

3. AFTER CONFIRMING THAT HE HAD REVIEWED FULL TRANSCRIPT OF KHADDAM'S TALKS IN WASHINGTON, I SAID THAT I WOULD NOT GO OVER THAT GROUND AGAIN NOR DID I WISH TO ANTICIPATE WHAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD WANT TO FOCUS ON IN THEIR MAY 9 MEETING. HOWEVER, AS HAD BEEN EMPHASIZED TO KHADDAM, WE

CONSIDERED THE ISSUES OF PALESTINIANS, BORDERS AND SECURITY ARRANGEMENTS, AND THE NATURE OF PEACE, TO BE INTERRELATED. RECALLED THAT IN ADDRESSING TOPIC OF NATURE OF PEACE WITH YOU IN LATE FEBRUARY, ASSAD HAD CONFINED HIMSELF TO THE GENERALITY, "IF A GOOD STEP IS TAKEN, POSITIVE STEPS COULD FOLLOW." SAID I WAS REASONABLY SURE THAT PRESIDENT CARTER WOULD WELCOME A MORE SPECIFIC DISCUSSION OF THIS AND OTHER TOPICS NEXT MONDAY.

4. NOTED SOME ARABS WERE SUGGESTING THAT TO ASK THEM TO DETAIL HOW THEY FORESAW THE NATURE OF PEACE AND HOW TO NORMALIZE RELATIONS IN THE AREA IS ONLY AN ISRAELI MANEUVER TO CREATE OBSTACLES TO THE PEACE PROCESS. IT WOULD BE TRAGIC IF THE ARABS WERE TO REACT TO THIS ASSUMPTION AND ABANDON THE PROCESS. EXPRESSED HOPE THAT ASSAD DID NOT CONSIDER AMERICAN INTEREST IN THE NATURE OF PEACE AND PROGRESSIVE NORMALIZATION OF ARAB/ISRAELI RELATIONS TO BE JUST AN ECHO OF AN ISRAELI POSITION. LEAVE THE MIDDLE EAST ASIDE, I SAID, AND LOOK AT HOW THE CARTER ADMINISTRATION IS TRYING TO NORMALIZE AMERICA'S OWN RELATIONS AROUND THE WORLD, WITH VIETNAM, CUBA AND CHINA. ARABS WERE CITING PRECEDENTS FROM HISTORY THAT "NORMAL RELATIONS" DID NOT PREVENT WAR. THEY WERE REFERRING TO EXAMPLES DRAWN FROM AMERICAN DIPLOATIC HISTORY SINCE WORLD WAR II DESIGNED TO DEMONSTRATE THAT WE STILL LACKED NORMAL RELATIONS WITH SEVERAL COUNTRIES EVEN THOUGH WE WERE NOT IN A STATE OF WAR WITH THEM. I POINTED OUT THAT THESE PRECEDENTS WERE NOT FULLY APPLICABLE TO THE PRESENT MIDDLE EAST SITUATION NOR HELPFUL TO THE EFFORT WE WERE ALL MAKING TO COME TO GRIPS WITH THE MIDDLE EAST PROBLEM. CARTER HAD
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TOLD KHADDAM HE IS AWARE HOW MUCH THE MIDDLE EAST AREA IS DOMINATED BY SENSITIVITIES ENGENDERED BY THE CONFLICT OF THE LAST THIRTY YEARS BUT HIS EMPHASIS IS ON LOOKING TO THE FUTURE AND A JUST MIDDLE EAST SOLUTION.

5. ASSAD REPLIED HE UNDERSTOOD THE U.S. POSITION THAT THE THREE BASIC ISSUES ARE INTERRELATED AND THAT WE HAD ARRIVED AT OUR CONCLUSION INDEPENDENTLY OF ISRAEL. HE DID NOT GO FURTHER THAN THIS OTHER THAN TO INDICATE CRYPTICALLY, "AT ANY POINT IN TIME, THE POSSIBLE HAS ITS LIMITS" BUT STRESSED HE WAS CONFIDENT HE WOULD HAVE A USEFUL DISCUSSION WITH CARTER.
PELLETREAU

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